An Initiative to Codesign Decolonised Content in a 4th-Year Psychology Course

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Acknowledgement of Country

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Objectives

To share a **practical example** of working toward **decolonising and Indigenising curricula** for APAC Level 2 programs.

Work samples and **resources** will be presented.

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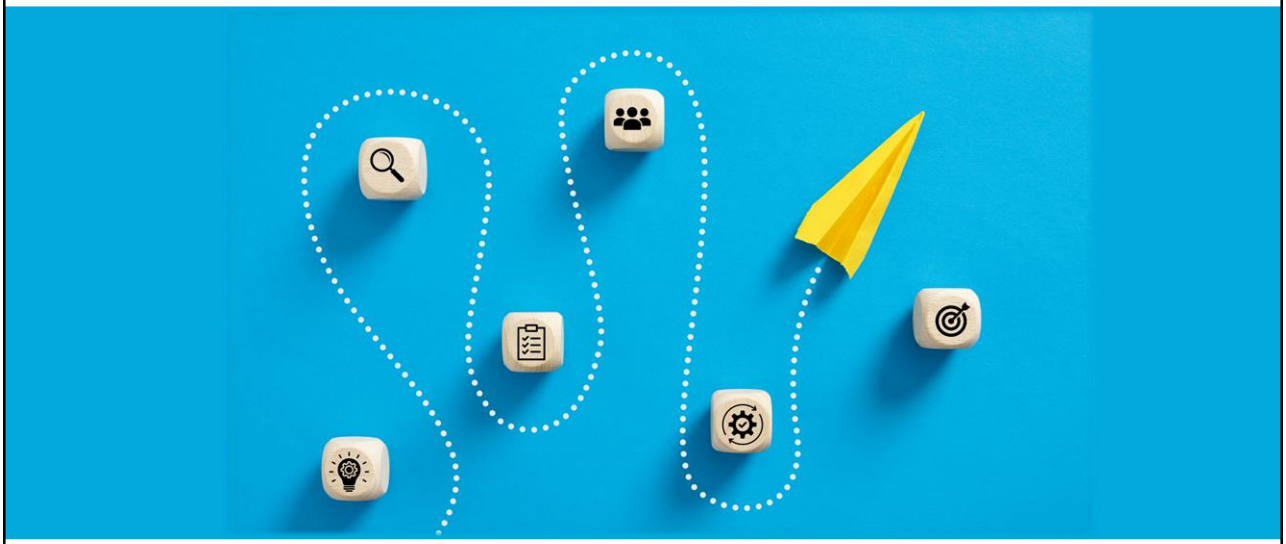

Barriers to decolonising psychology are **multifaceted** and involve institutional and individual factors.

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Non-Indigenous academics may lack confidence and capability, including reluctance to reflect on ways they may **inadvertently perpetuate institutionalised racism**.

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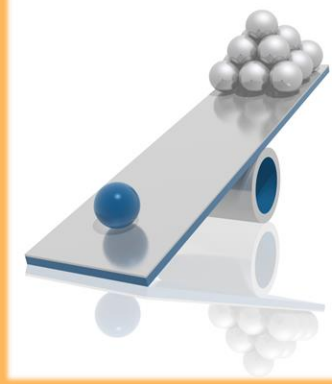

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academics have described **"racialised power imbalances"** that impose a burden "to be the consulted, collaborator, mentor, developer and deliverer" (Thunig & Jones, 2020, p. 8).

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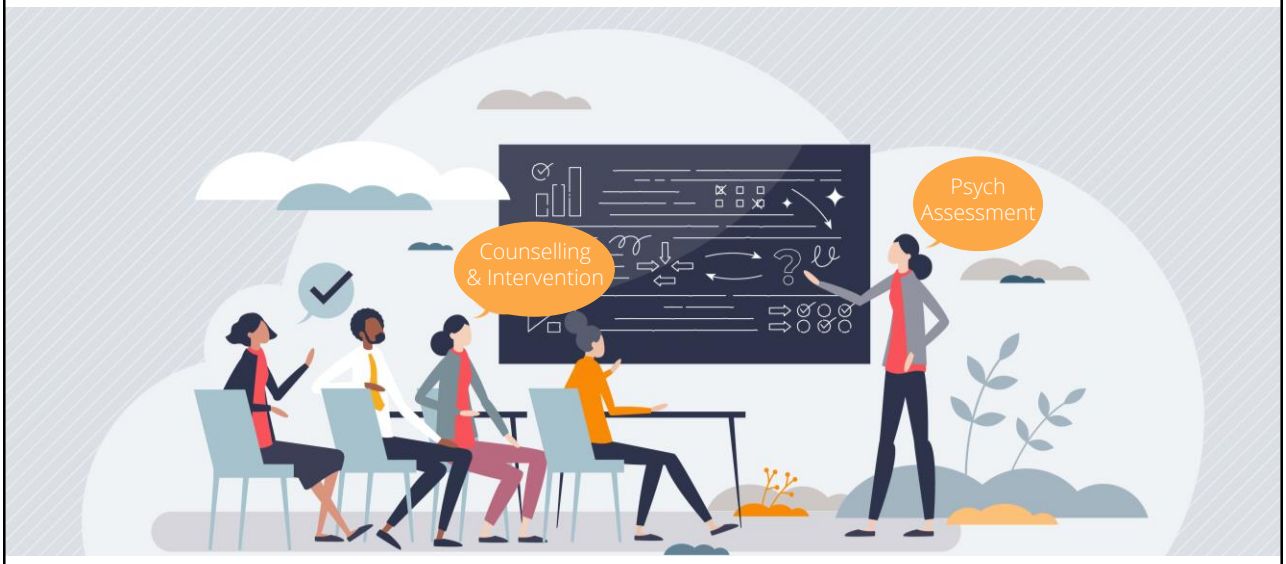

Two units in our APAC Level 2 (Honours and Graduate Diploma, Advanced) programs were selected.

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Institutional context

Support from Department Chair & School Dean

Active Swinburne Indigenous Psychology Committee

History of engagement with Moondani Toombadool Centre

Involvement with AIPEP Community of Practice

Existing relationships with a range of stakeholders

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Two-way learning (Nakata, 2002) between non-Indigenous academics and Aboriginal expert partners was prioritised.

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Approach

Core principles of **justice & self-determination**

Resources & learnings from **AIPEP & the COP**

Codesign process with Aboriginal expert partners and non-Indigenous academics

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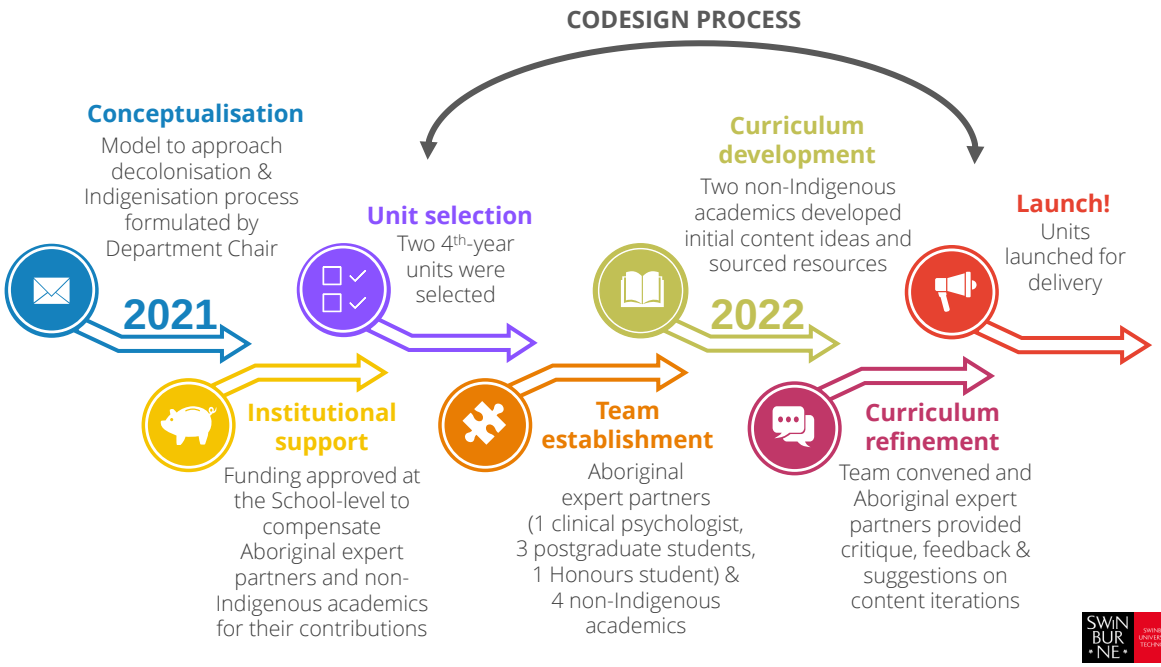

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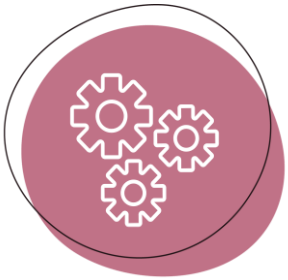
Unit revisions

- Weekly learning outcomes
- Teaching module content
  - Readings
  - Videos
  - Podcasts/interviews
  - Activities
  - Case examples
  - Reflective activities
- Assessments



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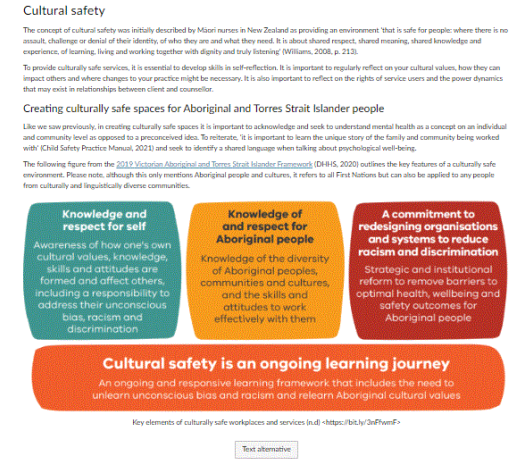
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **Cultural Safety Framework**



Cultural safety

The concept of cultural safety was initially described by Māori nurses in New Zealand as providing an environment 'that is safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening' (Williams, 2008, p. 213).

To provide culturally safe services, it is essential to develop skills in self-reflection. It is important to regularly reflect on your cultural values, how they can impact others and where changes to your practice might be necessary. It is also important to reflect on the rights of service users and the power dynamics that may exist in relationships between client and counsellor.

Creating culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Like we saw previously, in creating culturally safe spaces it is important to acknowledge and seek to understand mental health as a concept on an individual and community level as opposed to a preconceived idea. To reiterate, 'it is important to learn the unique story of the family and community being worked with' (Child Safety Practice Manual, 2021) and seek to identify a shared language when talking about psychological well-being.

The following figure from the 2019 Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework (DHHS, 2020) outlines the key features of a culturally safe environment. Please note, although this only mentions Aboriginal people and cultures, it refers to all First Nations but can also be applied to any people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Knowledge and respect for self
Awareness of how one's own cultural values, knowledge, skills and attitudes are formed and affect others, including a responsibility to address their unconscious bias, racism and discrimination

Knowledge of and respect for Aboriginal people
Knowledge of the diversity of Aboriginal peoples, communities and cultures, and the skills and attitudes to work effectively with them

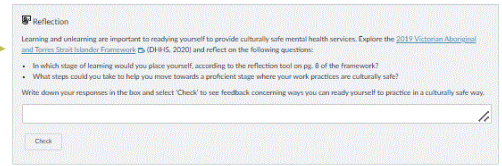
A commitment to redesigning organisations and systems to reduce racism and discrimination
Strategic and institutional reform to remove barriers to optimal health, wellbeing and safety outcomes for Aboriginal people

Cultural safety is an ongoing learning journey
An ongoing and responsive learning framework that includes the need to unlearn unconscious bias and racism and relearn Aboriginal cultural values

Key elements of culturally safe workplaces and services (n.d) <https://bit.ly/3nPYwmF>

Text alternative

Reflective exercise



Reflection

Learning and unlearning are important to readying yourself to provide culturally safe mental health services. Explore the 2019 Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework (DHHS, 2020) and reflect on the following questions:

- In which stage of learning would you place yourself, according to the reflection tool on pg. 8 of the framework?
- What steps could you take to help you move towards a proficient stage where your work practices are culturally safe?

Write down your responses in the box and select 'Check' to see feedback concerning ways you can ready yourself to practice in a culturally safe way.

Check

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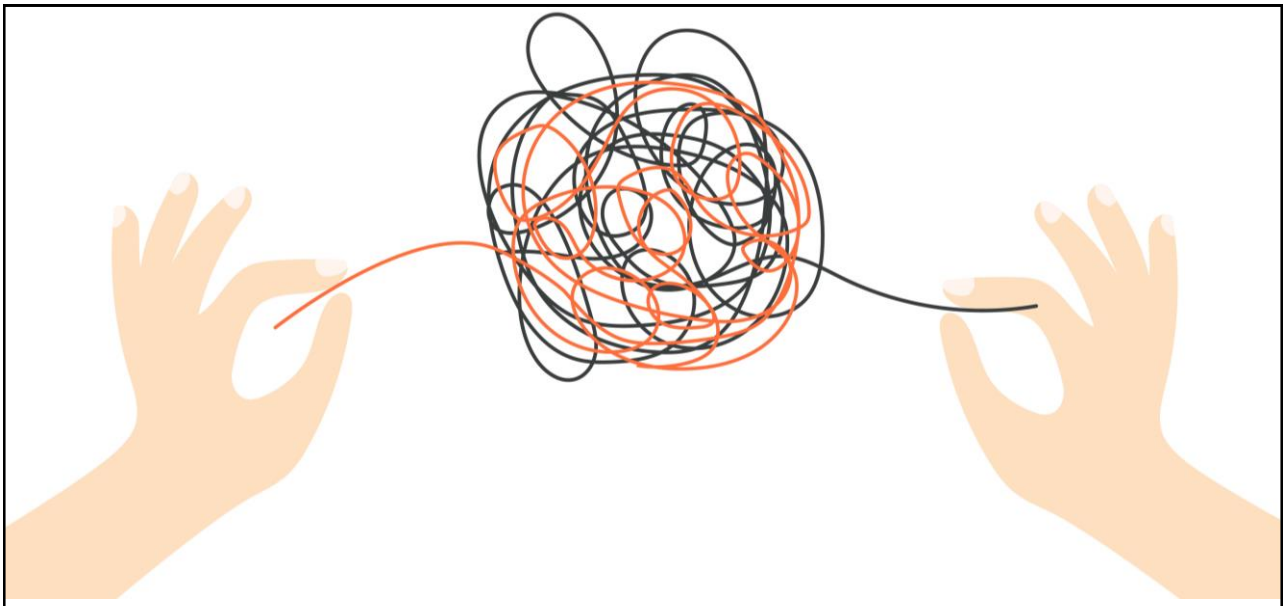

"Our collaborative work had the hallmarks of **messiness, joy and discomfort**" (Delbridge et al., 2022, p. 1493).

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A foundational model

educators might consider when striving to decolonise and Indigenise their courses.

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Thank you!

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